Depot Town Rag

September 1988

FREE 100% RAG CONTENT

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Artists & Artisans create co-op gallery in the Follett House

Just a year ago a cooperative of local artists formed yet another creative interest group in the district — the Depot Town Artists and Artisans, and now they've moved into the first floor of the historic Follett House at 17 Cross Street to maintain a constant offering of their artistic production. In addition to building owner Jerry Meadows' antiques, the gallery exhibits oil paintings, watercolors, prints, drawings, sculptures, fabrics, jewerly and pottery.

It was just a year ago that the group mounted a tent showing at the entry to the Michigan Artrain. Since that time they have shown their work together at several neighborhood and regional events.

Their new venture, the Depot Town Art Gallery, held its grand opening the evening of August 25th and will continue in that space as long as their success and Depot Town's support last.

Looking east on Cross Street from the front door of the old Alibi Bar (now Aubree's Saloon) in the 1950's. This year's Heritage Festival kickoff party was held in Miller's garage on August 25.

-Photo courtesy of Jack Miller

Depot Town Association Annual Election Meeting

7:30 p.m. Wednesday
September 15, 1988
at *The Old Caboose*

The nominating committee will circulate the annual election line-up around the district during the first week of September. Let them know of your willingness to serve your neighborhood. Remember, of you don't do it, somebody else will mess everything up! This is the year to volunteer to take the responsibility for our district's policies and promotions. Tell your neighbors listed below that you are ready.

The committee: Sandee French-at Aubree's Saloon, Loren Hansen-Standard Printing, and Judy Monaghan - at PCHA or c/o the DTA Caboose.

Ups and Downs in Ypsilanti's neighborhoods

Depot Town - from the bottom to the top

"I'll meet you down in Depot Town," is a phrase heard with increasing regularity in the last decade. And, whether it's at Heritage Festival or any other time throughout the year, meeting "down in Depot Town" promises old fashioned, down-home hospitality and warmth not often seen in slicker commercial districts of the Twentieth Century.

Countless articles have appeared in the dailies and the slicker magazines extolling the turn-around of that little commercial district down by the railroad tracks in Ypsilanti telling how it's been an up-hill battle to pull the neighborhood back to respectability by its own bootstraps. Those high points and low ebbs are really what it's all about.

Every town had its places "on the hill" and Ypsilanti was no exception. The most prominent architectural example, the Water Tower, stands on the highest land overlooking the bottom land of the Huron River. The more prestigious homes and properties smiled down on the town from high banked lawns and lofty towers.

When the railroad came to town, it followed the flat plain along the river banks and serviced the mills which had already grown up there. New industry, of course, situated along the same bottom land to take advantage of these two modes of transportation; one natural, the other man-made.

And when it became necessary for upwardly-mobile citizens to "look down on someone," it was easy to glance down the streets of the City to the lower railroad district and warn

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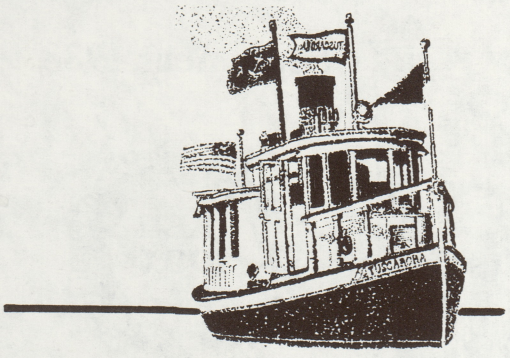

Cruise Ohio's Maumee River

on the

Shawnee Princess

a real paddle-wheel steamboat

with the

Depot Town Antique Engine Club

Saturday, 9/10, 7-10 p.m.

Grand Rapids, Ohio

$7 per person

Reservation: 941-4091,

697-0258, 397-2877

37 E. CROSS

483-4555

Always something to be done - down in Depot Town

Depot Towners never settle for "good enough", and all that action in The Old Caboose is a good indicator of this local ethic. Here's your invitation to join your neighbors in what has proven to be a heroic example of neighborly cooperation and energy.

The Depot Town Association The parent group to all the rest on this list, DTA is a non-profit, tax-exempt incorporation of the State of Michigan. DTA is dedicated to "preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate." Annual promotions include Heritage Festival events and exhibits, the children's Hallowe'en party, the Victorian Holiday, involvement in the Festival of Lights, and Jazz events with WEMU such as the Frog Island Festival, the Winter Jazz Series and the Heritage Jazz Competition. DTA helps members with presentations to the Historic District Commission and mounts a continuous promotional campaign which includes billboards, advertising and the monthly *Depot Town Rag.*

DTA meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Next meeting (the annual election meeting!) is at 7:30 p.m. in the Old Caboose on September 15th.

The Historic Depot Town Foundation is the cooperation of property owners in the district who aid each other in matters of City government, investments, long-range planning for the district and physical plant management. Among their current projects is the re-activization of the Depot Town Development Authority through the Mayor and City Council. They meet in the Old Caboose on the 1st Thursday of each month.

The Depot Town Merchants' Committee represents local business owners, managers and employees in such matters as group advertising, special sales events and promotions. Their current project is improvement of outdoor lighting for the district. They meet for breakfast at the Old Town Restaurant on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month.

The Depot Town Antique Engine Club restores and exhibits antique gas and steam engines and meets on the 4th Thursday of each month at the Freight House Coffee Shop unless otherwise noted. They have a monthly newsletter, *The Exhaust,* and maintain engines from Maytag washer-size to an operating steamboat.

The Depot Town Artists & Artisans meet on the 1st Monday of each month to encourage each other's efforts in the visual arts through critiques, exhibitions and sales of their original and creative work. They represent the following media - water and oil painting, drawing, pottery, fabrics, printmaking and sculpture. Although the meet in the many studios in the district, they, too, use The Old Caboose as a home base.

The Depot Town Engineering Society uses The Old Caboose as a clearing house for information on jobs and special neighborhood projects for local kids between the ages of twelve and eighteen. They work for love or for money, and district projects help them get the necessary clothes and materials for school each fall. Neighbors seeking their assistance simply put a note in the Old Caboose's mail slot and usually the kids respond the next day.

All of the above groups are open to anyone who wishes to participate in the life the community called Depot Town. Let your interest be known via The Old Caboose and get in on the fun. Together, almost anything is possible.

— Continued from page one

their sons and daughters to stay away from the "low life" down in Depot Town.

Today's vistas show the same stratifications. Stand on East Cross Street up beyond Jack Miller's Hudson dealership and look straight west to the water tower. Depot Town is completety settled below the eye level from this vantage point. The same is true for the opposite view, but it's harder to maintain your stance with all that one-way traffic bearing down on you. Runners and joggers know only too well that it's difficult to keep your pace as you leave Depot Town in any direction, since it's up-hill all the way.

The same is true for today's seamy-side which has settled into Michigan Avenue's parallel to Depot Town. The river valley seems to have dumped all the dope pushers and prostitutes into that neighborhood for this decade. It's difficult for Depot towners to "look down" on that situation, since they're really just down stream from us. City Hall, the Fire and Police Departments, of course, are all up on the hill and Councilmembers expressing how "deeply, deeply, deeply concerned" they are about the situation just don't reach far enough to today's bottom.

When Depot Town's Central Bar closed, a local police officer stated that the previous clientele would just move to a new space. "There's got to be a bottom somewhere," he said. And we didn't believe it until we had time to get out of our own local project and look around a little. That old blues ballad says, "Been down so long it looks like it's up to me." We understand.

"The Mean Bean"

at 17 East Cross

in historic

Depot Town

Depot Doo

Fine Design in

Hair Style

25 East Cross • 484-3045

Promises, promises

Those mysterious orange and yellow cirlces on the pavement adjoining the Market Plaza may be leading to a report from the City on Depot Town's north-side alley situation. For three years, now, City Hall has been promising an official survey to facilitate better control of the parking and traffic situation in the alley behind the buildings from Aubree's to the Follett House.

Depot Towners first became concerned when they realized that random parking and remodeling have made it difficult for fire engines and other emergency vehicles to negotiate that thoroughfare. When they asked the City to make it a "one-way" and post "no parking" signs, the City realized that it wasn't sure who owned what and who had responsibility/ liabilty.

City Manager, Matt Hennessee, since he began work in Our Town three years ago, has been spearheading the project which met with many twists and turns as he examined the property lines. Private property, railroad property and City-owned property may have overlapped each other over the years and, before the City can post ordinance-governed notices, it must determine where the legal boundaries exist.

A DTA meeting last winter saw City officials promise a July report. DPW's Mike Agar called to extend that deadline to the end of August. Since that time, City Manager has announced his move to the State of Oregon. Local historians with great patience may wish to attend the September 15 DTA election to see if those little orange and yellow survey marks have uncovered a final report yet.

It's no secret any more!

For the second time in a year, your *Rag* editor has inadvertently dropped the ad copy of one of our businesses from a monthly publication. Paul and Rebecca Dornfeld's *Our Little Secret* is that swanky used clothing emporium in the eastern end of the Follett House. Stop in and tell them how you missed their ad in the August issue and what a delightful little shop it is. We're doing a lot of crow eating over here too, and a little help from our readers whould be appreciated. They've been a loyal and neighborly amenity in the block, and we need to give them all the credit they deserve. Our apologies. Our secret love's no secret, any more!

-ed

New on the block...

Accent Neon is now ensconsed in the Millworks on River Street, just south of the Food Co-op. They create commercial signage near the same space that housed Huron Advertising a few years ago. There is no doubt that this fascinating craft of glass bending will grow with the same success.

Picture Percect Tattoo has taken over the north end of the Thompson Block on River Street, directly across from the depot. Modern tattoo designs grace the walls — along with dozens of trophy heads from a recent trip to Africa! Folks who thought tattoo parlors and pool halls were scary places will change their minds after meeting this charming addition to the Depot Town milieu.

Heritage Heroes

- thanks for the Festival

It's always dangerous to try to thank everyone for their help in a task as huge as the Ypsilanti Heritage Festival. In fact, to list all those who helped make the entire tenth annual Festival a reality would fill more than our tiny six pages could handle. So here is a list to thank the principals for those events which were centered in Depot Town:

David Wheeler, of Utilities Instrumentation, for bringing his compatriots from Greenfield Village with their antique fire fighting apparatus which graced the west bank in Riverside Park. This was an exciting first-time-event for Ypsilanti.

Jack Miller, of Miller Motors, and his committee for again assembling that great exposition of antique and special interest cars which filled the Heritage Parade and then stretched up and down the center of East Cross Street on Saturday and Sunday.

Carolyn McKeever sends thanks to the dozens who helped with the beer tent which supports the Heritage Jazz Competition. Bar workers, gate keepers, cleaners and hosts; they made this traditional musical event happen again.

Jim Dulzo and the radio WEMU staff again put together an important musical event in Depot Town. This tradition now begins its ninth year in the neighborhood.

Serenity House sponsored the circus for the second year, and also pitched in on the jazz tent clean-up every night — a not too glamorous, but very necessary job.

Gary McKeever thanks Dairy Queen and his many volunteers for putting on another highly successful Great Train Race. Once again, the runners beat the Amtrak flyer from Detroit.

Ron Bracken thanks all the active members of the Depot Town Antique Engine Club for their participation in that group's fourth showing at Heritage Festival's Early Engine Expo. Their group has proven to be one of the most active special interest groups in the block, with year-round events both in and out of the district (see related announcement re: the Steamboat trip).

The Depot Town merchants, as usual, deserve much credit just for keeping their shops open, clean and friendly. The many sidewalk displays related to the interior business certainly helped to tell the rest of the world that Depot Town is much more than just a three-day Festival.

483-3637
Our Little Secret
Resale Clothing & Other Niceties
23 E. Cross Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
In Historic Depot Town

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Ypsilanti's Farmers' Market
in historic Depot Town
Every Wed. & Sat.
8 a.m. — 3 p.m.

Aubree's Saloon & Second Floor
39 East Cross

How they beat the heat down in Depot Town

The summer heat wave of 1988 drove much of modern civilization into the air-conditioned shopping malls and movie theaters out along the strip. Less adventuresome types stayed home in front of the A/C and agitated their post-natal drip long before the allergy season set in. Even more folks spent extra time at work, slept as late as possible and looked forward to a weekend at the cottage — which was just as miserable as at home.

Depot Town loyalists were interviewed in late August and shared the following helpful tips on learning to live with "the elements"...

☐ The Old Town is always cool. Sit at a window table and think how lovely the block will look for the Festival of Lights in November.

☐ We hung out at both the ice cream parlors and never worried about the excess poundage. We sweated it off the rest of the day!

☐ My favorite cool place on the "Tridge". The shade from the Cross Street Bridge overhead and the babble of the Huron River below create the coolest, most peaceful place around.

☐ Start your day later, sit on the benches with the old folks, wave at the trains, read the paper and talk with everyone who comes by. That will keep you cool this summer and for many more. That's the way to become a neighborhood regular in any weather!

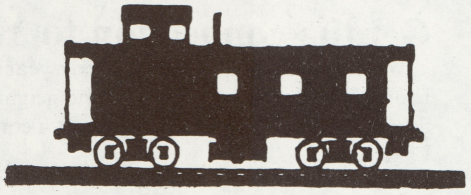
☐ The breeze is constant inside the Farmer's Market Freight House every Wednesday and Saturday. When the wind doesn't make the air move, the neighborhood gossip will. I wouldn't miss it. It's better than Sixty Minutes or the Eleven O'clock News.

☐ We water the flowers every evening after the sun goes down. While the hose is dribbling, we sit and pull weeds. In the process we met almost everyone on the block. It was a good social experiment and a great tranquilizer.

☐ Feeding the ducks in Riverside Park is just like a short trip to the wilderness. The ducks like it and we like it. It's the coolest place to be.

☐ With the front and back doors open, we were able to keep a constant breeze going through the shop. Gentle conversation and slow motion add to the inherited charm of the district. We could keep this up all year.

☐ I put one of those inflatable kiddie pools out on the roof and sat in it nearly every evening. Because of the algae build-up, it had to be emptied every other day, but the run-off was good for the flowers below.



***NOTICE: Due to early publication of this issue for Heritage Festival* distibution, D.T.A. minutes** for the regular monthly meeting in August will not be published until next month. A special notice of nominations for the September election will be posted around the neighborhood ten days before election.

September 1988

For the good of the block:

Merchants Committee
8:30 a.m., Thursday, 9/1
Old Town Restaurant

Historic Depot Town Foundation
8 p.m. Thursday, 9/1
The Old Caboose

Steamboat Cruise
7-10 p.m. Saturday, 9/10
Grand Rapids, Ohio
(see announcement)

Artist & Artisans
7:30 p.m. Monday, 9/12
Depot Town Art Gallery
19 East Cross Street

Merchant Committee
8:30 a.m., Thursday, 9/15
Old Town Restaurant

Depot Town Association, Inc.
Annual Election Meeting
7:30 p.m., Thursday, 9/15
The Old Caboose

Depot Town Antique Engine Club
7:30 p.m., Thursday, 9/22
Freight House

Miller's SINCE 1896
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42 E. CROSS
HISTORIC DEPOT TOWN
Open All Year!

Sidetrack
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It's no jungle out there!

To the Editor:

RE: Your article on the planter in front of Apple Annie's/Jim MacDonald's. Thanks for the plug, but have the I-told-you-so-ers compared our tree with any other on the block? Plastic Astro-turf *does* work.

-Rick Talbot, Apple Annie's

Rick:

Annie and Company still watered (underneath all that plasticity) and their miserable maple looks like it will survive the summer. Other flora did not fare so well in The Great Drought of the summer of '88. Good job, Annie!

-ed.

Depot Town Rag

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG:

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc., a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.

The Depot Town Association, Inc.,
Tom Dodd, President
The Caboose, 400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Standard Printing Company
35 E. Cross Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
483-0339

Old Town Restaurant
Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
38 East Cross

Patronize The Merchants That Bring You The
* * * * * * * *
Depot Town Rag
* * * * * * * *

Hearts For The Homeless Concert

The third annual all-day, outdoor, inter-denominational Christian music fest to benefit this oftentimes invisible population of Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti will be held in Riverside Park from noon-9 p.m. Saturday, September 24th.

Featuring: Brothers Three & Company, Indiana Street Chorale, Proclamation, DAVID, Little Flock, Ypsilanti's Children's Chorus, Not-Just-Gymnastics, Abundant Life, Birch Cove, Dr. Bachman's Good News Medicine Show, Brave New Voice, Our Lady's Madrigals, Jim Jablonski & Friends, The GospeLights, Chosen Generations, Red Alert Mimes, Craig Kukuk, Jim's Opfermann and Peter's, Tony Sadler, Kathy Mazak, Keith Glasspole, Daisy Webner, Kevin Bryer, Dan Bauer, Tom Haeffner, and Gary Mull.

Admission: Adults $5 in advance, $6 at the gate; children 12 and under $3 advance, $4 at the gate. Tickets are available from Evangel Temple Assembly of God, 2455 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday, 9:30 - 12 (769-4157).

Get the connection to Ypsilanti's park system

When the "tridge" was completed a year ago to connect Depot Town with Riverside and Frog Island Parks, many visitors and neighbors saw those two lovely City parks for the first time. Since then they've heard about a connection to North Bay Park at the top of Ford Lake.

Superior Township. No signs for a park connector here. The closest thing we could find was a cross-road park on Prospect Road at Joy Road. There was no information there about an intergovernmental park system. Not even a billboard saying, "You Are Here!" We walked over to the Township Hall to catch a cab, but since most of Superior is rural, we asked one of the Township constables for a ride to the southern end of their park system. He dropped us off on Clark Road and we climbed over the fence into Highland Cemetery.

City of Ypsilanti. The Cemetery was gorgeous in late summer and we ran into a bunch of local preservationists doing their grief work over the Starkweather Chapel. Shades of Henry Hobson Richardson, this weighty example of Victoriana looked like it should be holding down narrow-gauge railroad tracks for a line to a depot in Ann Arbor of Marshall, Michigan.

After a spectacular view over the City and Eastern Michigan University, we hiked down the embankment toward the Huron River to find the bike path. We chopped our way through nettles and ivy — and vowed to take good showers at the other end — but found no trail other than one made by rabbits, deer and twelve-year old Robinson Crusoes, We followed it to the back of Motor Wheel's property on Forest Avenue. Across the River, behind the former Farm Bureau, we saw evidence of Ypsilanti's homeless living in a "hobo jungle" much like those of the 1930's Depression.

Depot Town. We hiked toward the Recycling Center and descended into Frog Island where joggers, soccer teams and dog-walkers greeted us. "There's your trail," they said, "up on the dike." We found the asphalted path which began at Forest Avenue and started southward. It took us to the end of the former Ypsilanti High School football field to the top of an amphitheatre. This, no doubt, is all that is left of the Ypsilanti Greek Theatre. With so little signage, it's no wonder so few could find it.

From here, it was obvious that we should follow the "tridge" to the park across the river. Riverside Park opened its verdant plain and we fed the ducks along our passage. Snarly teens greeted us with loud taped music as we enterd the parking lot. We paused on the octagonal stage long enough to make it seem that we, too, had permission to use this park and then continued south toward Michigan Avenue.

Along the river trail we paused at a park bench to hear locals tell how the Kill-deer had been abused during the Heritage Festival, but would probably return the following spring and build their nests right in the middle of the field again. They never learn.

Downtown Ypsilanti. As we approached the rear of Materials Unlimited, we kept an eye out for signs directing us to a river trail to Ford Lake. By the time we reached Max's Delicatessen we called a cab and meandered toward to Ford Plant along Interstate 94. Fifty dollars later, we found as unmarked driveway on the south side of the highway — back between the National Guard Armory and the new golf course/Raddison Hotel.

Ypsilanti Township. No cars were parked in this lot, and little wonder. At first inspection it looks like an overflow lot for the commuters who use the lot next to Whittaker Road. But on the east end of the lot is a carefully hidden sign pointing to a trail. We walked into the woods.

This lovely trail creates a border between the freeway and the golf course and is also accessible from the former sewage treatment plant across from the Gault Village Shopping Center. The two arfully hidden entries guard an almost magical esplanade through forest, meadow and marsh onto tiny islands which create the North Bay area of Ford Lake. Herons, egrets and cranes waded in the shallow water and somnolent fishermen lazed under the newly planted cottonwood trees. Grandmothers walked their progeny over the several arched bridges which looked like relatives of the "tridge" back in Depot Town.

We traversed about half a mile while looking forward to the tower we could see at the bay's southern terminus. Upon arrival, we trudged to the top like good tourists, and then began assessing our next route.

There was none — unless we wanted to swim to the shore and the closest golf fairway. We had climbed to the end of a question mark and now could only retrace our steps and hope to find another taxi. Giving that up, we walked along Huron River Drive to JYRO Park.

We walked past apartment/condos into the up-steam version of the park. As we approached the central toll-booth, we fully expected to see politicians locked in mortal combat at the entry. Instead, motor boats and trailers filled the park, families picniked, and little children were trying to memorize and understand the name for the park they were using.

Will this be the beginning of a month-long trek to Lake Erie? Only the settlers of Woodruff's Grove could have had a harder journey, and they were going up stream. Maybe we'll try it in a four-wheel drive vehicle another time. As Daddy used to say we drove past the obiquitous frozen custard stands, "Maybe next time."

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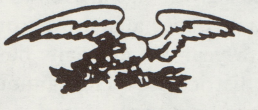

Olde Towne
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